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think that among these unpretentious verses are some, which will give others as much pleasure as they did me.[1]

I wrote down the collection in the winter of 1900—1901, during the excavations of the Berlin Museum at the sun-temple of the old king, Ne-user-Rē, at Abūṣîr. (The ruin is called by the people: Abu Gūrâb.) In spite of this, not one of my informants was a Būṣîri (man of Abūṣîr), but the entire collection of songs comes from Sa"āris[2] (Saqqāries), inhabitants of Sa"āra (Saqqāra), familiar to all travelers. The nucleus, some forty, I obtained from our black Abu Bekr Ibrāhîm es-Sūdâni, a bright, half-grown lad, whose family for several generations, had lived in Egypt. The remainder, with but few exceptions, were contributed by our old rafîr (watchman), Maḥmûd Moḥammed el-'Itr. All the other songs also, were rewritten at his dictation, so that all these printed texts give his pronunciation, which was very beautiful and clear. The old man was indefatigable; every day he came with a new song. "Write! — A new one has flown into my head", were usually his words. When the text was

[1]) A few songs from this collection have already been printed in Arbeit und Rythmus, by K. Buecher (Leipzig, Teubner 1902), and in No. 14 of the Mitteilungen der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft.

[2]) The Arabic letter qāf, which in this vicinity is either not pronounced at all, or is spoken like a sharp hiātus, I designate with: '. I found this pronunciation as far as Ehnasye near Beni-Suēf.

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once fixed, he would patiently repeat it four or five times for correction, and proved himself an excellent commentator, in spite of some misconceptions, which, undoubtedly, may have slipped in. He could neither read nor write, which fact I think was, for my purpose, very fortunate; and I was glad, also, that he knew no other language than his own. It is a pleasure to recall the time, when I spent the greater part of my leisure moments, squatting before the low, reed-covered watchman's-hut, built of the stones from the debris of the excavations, while I looked into the alert face of the one-eyed, old man, and talked with him. I wrote down the songs at once in the transliteration. Only in the case of doubtful words, in order to make certain of the consonants, did I employ a scribe to take down the Arabic at Maḥmûds dictation.[1] I hope, therefore, to be able to offer a comparatively reliable Arabic text. Maḥmûd declared decidedly several times, that none of the songs was composed by himself. The title of my book, therefore, must not be misunderstood; it is intended only to state, that it presents the entire fund of songs which Maḥmûd knew. They are songs which are

[1]) It is a veritable cross, that the uneducated scribes, who never pronounce the qāf, either do not write it at all, or indicate it by the alif. Because of this, many words are disfigured beyond recognition. It was a great help to me, to have among our workmen, several from Quft in Upper Egypt, who pronounce the qāf like hard g. In doubtful cases I had them repeat the words in question, and could thus determine the lacking qāfs.

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[194] The reader should note that all the vowels in the transliteration have the sounds of Italian or continental vowels.

[92] The word, fellāḥ, which has been translated: "peasant", means literally: plowman.

For the sake of preserving the play on words, so characteristic of the Arabic, it has sometimes been necessary to translate literally, where, in order to be perfectly intelligible, a foot-note was essential. (Numbers 34—35, "finished".)

Owing to the differences in our occidental, living arrangements, it has been difficult, in some instances, to preserve the comparisons which are more easily rendered in the German.

The task herewith completed, has given me unusual pleasure, since it has acquainted me with many things in the life of the people, which, during a winter in Egypt, entirely escaped me. I can only hope that the translation may render the same service to travelers in Egypt, as well as to all lovers of folk-lore.

Frances Hart Breasted.

Gross Lichterfelde, July 18, 1904.